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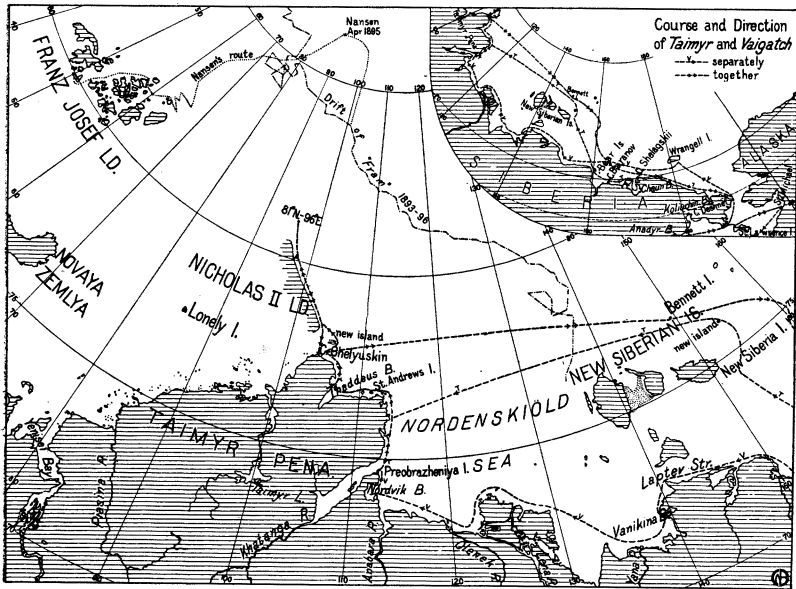
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NICHOLAS II LAND*

Brief reference has been made in *The Times* to the discovery by the Russian Hydrographical Expedition of a large island in the Arctic Ocean. Captain B. A. Vilkitsky, the leader, has sent the Admiralty an extract of the log, of which a translation is given below. It will be seen from it and from the accompanying map that some highly interesting oceanographical and other problems have been suggested or solved by the discovery.



Sketch Map of the Arctic Ocean North of Siberia Showing the Newly Discovered Nicholas II Land. Scale, 1:22,700,000. On both the main map and the inset the routes of the *Taimyr* and *Vaigatch* are shown by broken lines, double arrowheads being used to show their direction when sailing together, single arrowheads, with the initial of the respective vessel, when sailing separately. On the main map the drift of the *Fram* and Nansen's sledge journey are also shown for comparison.

An explanation is furnished thereby of the northerly curve described by the drift of the *Fram* during the Nansen Expedition of 1895-96. Judging by the distance that separates the northern limit of the explored coast and the *Fram*'s drift, it is not impossible that the new Emperor Nicholas II Land may extend beyond the 200 nautical miles explored by Captain Vilkitsky, and prove to be the nearest land to the Pole.

How far it may extend westward remains a matter for conjecture. We have no records of exploration in the waters to the east of Lonely Island. But the

* Reprinted from *The Times*, Russian Supplement, No. 6, London, Dec. 15, 1913, supplemented by Gen. Schokalsky's account in the *Geogr. Journ.* for January (Vol. 43, 1914, pp. 64-65).

presence of the land discovered by Captain Vilkitsky is sufficient to account for certain peculiarities of the Kara Sea. The conditions of the ice and of the currents and the salinity of the water in this sea have long suggested the theory that some very substantial obstacle stood between it and the Arctic Ocean. In 1882 Lieutenant Hovgaard, of the Danish Navy, actually sailed for Cape Chelyuskin to discover land to the north of the cape. He was, however, unable to reach the Taimyr Peninsula. The three expeditions that have successfully weathered Cape Chelyuskin—Professor Nordenskjöld in the *Vega* in 1878, Professor Nansen in the *Fram* in 1895, and Baron Toll in the *Zaria* in 1900—all failed to note even the appearance of land to the north, although, as Captain Vilkitsky now shows, an island lies not more than 20 miles away from the course steered by the expeditions.

And now a few words about the character and purpose of the Vilkitsky expedition. Some four years ago the Russian Government built and commissioned two small ice-breakers, the *Taimyr* and the *Vaigatch*, to proceed to the Far East, and thence, after surveying the northern waters, to go westward to the Murman coast. The idea was to settle the vexed question raised by the war with Japan as to the practicability of the northern passage for warships. Captain Vilkitsky, undaunted by the presence of unbroken ice off Cape Chelyuskin, which had caused his predecessor last year to recoil, tried to make the westward passage by skirting the barrier, and thanks to his pluck and persistence he was rewarded by the present discovery, adding one more to the long list of Russian exploits in the Far North.

LOG OF THE EXPEDITION

Having coaled and taken water from the *Argun* in Anadyr Bay I put to sea on August 4. On the night of August 6 we touched at Cape Deshnef (East Cape) and repainted the cross there. The transport *Vaigatch* laid her course towards Wrangell Island in order to ascertain the condition of the ice, while the *Taimyr* steamed along shore. During the cruise we took international meteorological observations. On the following day the vessels were among scattered ice and met the Norwegian steamer *Kit* walrus hunting. We lent her a chronometer and gave the crew some fresh fish. Along the meridian of Wrangell Island the ice was gathering. I received a wireless message from the *Stavropol*, which had been caught in the ice, and from the *Vaigatch*, which had failed to make Wrangell Island by five to ten miles because of the ice.

On August 9 the *Taimyr* forced her way to clear water and was off Cape Shelagskii. While awaiting the arrival of the *Vaigatch* we sounded Chaun Bay. On August 12 the *Vaigatch*, having made the meridian of Chaun Bay, met the *Stavropol* there and transferred the Kolyma-bound mail to her. The *Taimyr* was three days forcing her way through the ice until she was off Cape Baranov.

On August 15 we reached clear water. Having passed the Bear Islands we rejoined the *Vaigatch* and proceeded further—the *Taimyr* on a hydrological survey around the New Siberia Islands, the *Vaigatch* to complete our soundings along the coast. The rendezvous was at Transfiguration (Preobrazheniya) Island. On August 17, while skirting the broken ice thirty miles off the New Siberian coast, we came into shallow water.

Discovery of an Island. It was August 20 before we succeeded in finding a way northeast to the open sea. We then discovered a new island of volcanic

origin several miles in circumference. We raised the national flag, surveyed the island, killed some white bears and walruses, and went on. On August 21, while taking the great circle course towards Taimyr, we came off Bennett Island; on August 23 we reached the mainland in lat. 76° . There had been clear water all these days and a clear horizon, but we had seen nothing of the conjectured Sannikov Land. We turned south and joined the *Vaigatch* at Transfiguration Island that evening. We landed a shooting party which killed two reindeer and some bears. The *Vaigatch* had completed the soundings in Laptev Strait on August 17, keeping as far possible south of thirty-five-foot depths. On August 18 she had reconnoitred Vanikina Bay, the entrance proving unsatisfactory. On August 21 she began the survey of the mouths of the Olenek and Anabara, but contrary ice compelled her to stand away from the coast. On August 22 the *Vaigatch* entered Nordvik, sounding the southern coast of Begichev, where sharply-varying depths were found. Coming to shallows boat soundings were taken, but the water shoaled suddenly and the vessel touched a sandbank. On August 23 she floated off with the tide, surveyed the eastern coast of Begichev and arrived at Preobrazheniya Island.

On the morning of August 24 the *Taimyr*, after adjusting her compasses, steamed northward for coast survey. The *Vaigatch* proceeded to explore a large bay in latitude $75^{\circ} 50' N$. On August 25 she grounded on a shoal fifteen miles up the bay and could not get off till the *Taimyr* came to her assistance, on August 26, after completing her survey as far as latitude $76^{\circ} 30' N$. During the night the *Taimyr* took water from her consort and towed her off with the tide. We found cooking stoves at the entrance of the bay and further in, probably built by Khariton Laptev. The *Taimyr* continued coast survey work, while the *Vaigatch* took an astronomical observation and surveyed the islands. The observation was made on St. Andrew and St. Samuels Island. Thence onward we began to encounter ice.

On August 30 and 31 the *Taimyr* sounded in Thaddeus Bay to twenty-foot depths. The *Vaigatch* continued her coast and island survey. The ice was gathering. On September 1 we completed the survey of Cape Chelyuskin by taking cross bearings at a distance of six miles off shore. Both transports were stopped by solid ice and tried to skirt it.

The New Land. Thirty nautical miles northeast of Cape Chelyuskin the expedition discovered an island which was free of ice to the east. This island extends along the parallel, and its width at the eastern extremity is seven miles. After surveying the accessible part of the shore, the expedition skirted the edge of compact ice, encountering separate icebergs and broken ice. At daybreak on September 3, thirty nautical miles from the eastern point of the newly discovered island, we sighted the towering heights of an unknown land; seven miles off shore we sounded depths of 700 ft. The *Taimyr* proceeded to survey, while the *Vaigatch* stood off trying to get an observation.

The land proved to be of volcanic origin, containing extensive glaciers. On September 4 we landed at lat. $80^{\circ} 4' N$, long. $97^{\circ} 12' E$. I raised the Russian flag and declared the land annexed to his Imperial Majesty's dominions.

The evening of that day we raised anchor and went further north seeking a passage. The broken ice began to gather. On our way we surveyed the northeast shore of the new land for a distance of 20 miles. On the morning of September 5, in lat. $81^{\circ} N$, long. $96^{\circ} E$, we found unbroken ice on all sides. The soundings showed 116 ft. to 700 ft. We put back. On September 6 the

expedition returned to Cape Chelyuskin. The ice had not changed. On the next day we again went to the newly-discovered island. Ice was sweeping in from the east. The barometer was rising fast. On September 10 the *Taimyr* once more returned to Cape Chelyuskin. The east wind had broken up the ice somewhat, so I sent a land party under Dr. Starokadomsky and Lieut. Lavrov over the ice to discover how wide the ice barrier was. On September 11 the *Vaigatch* rejoined us, for the ice was beginning to block the island. We drilled the ice [at Chelyuskin] and found it to be three to four feet thick. The party reached the shore at the spot where the *Zaria* expedition mark stands, and after putting up a mark on Cape Chelyuskin itself went further on. The end of the icefield was not to be seen, but its width was at least forty miles.

The Voyage Continued. On September 11 the land party returned to the ship. We attempted to break our way through the ice, but succeeded in making only five miles in twenty-four hours. Our diminishing coal supply, the necessity of cleaning out our boilers, and the lateness of the season compelled me to put back to Vladivostok. While anchored off Cape Chelyuskin we killed a few more bears. On September 12 we headed [for the east] by the great circle route. For three days we encountered separate fields of ice and skirted them to southward. On September 18 we were off Bennett Island. I then learned that the *Taimyr's* condenser pipe had burst, and salt was filtering into the boilers, as their usual cleaning-time was overdue. Strong south winds prevailed.

Taking shelter under the northern shore of the island I sent a land party headed by Dr. Starokadomsky to look for the collection left by Baron Toll. They erected a cross on Cape Emmelina, in memory of Toll and his followers. The collections, weighing seven pounds (252 lbs.) were found; they included fossils, impressions of plants, and a mammoth tusk.

†[On September 22 the wind became lighter, and the expedition surveyed the island and started south. It was intended to take the great circle route to Wrangell Island, but the heavy ice obliged the expedition to go by zigzags about 300 miles along the meridian of 160° E. Sometimes the ships met new ice, and it was very difficult to pick their way during the darkness of the nights. On September 25 they came to open water and immediately trawled for zoological purposes.

The next day the expedition met the ice up to the meridian of Chaun Bay, but the water was open from 70° N. and 180° E. On September 29 the ships reached Koliuchin Bay and surveyed it. They started on October 3, but a heavy gale compelled them to anchor; the route was then continued to Cape Deshnef. On the 22nd the cape was passed, but 40 miles from Providence Bay a heavy storm caught the ships, which rolled about 55° and the speed against the wind was not more than half a knot. In the night the tiller-rope of the *Taimyr* broke, and only the next night could the ships approach the shores of St. Lawrence Island. On October 9 the expedition was at St. Michael, Alaska, and on October 27 at Petropavlovsk in Kamchatka, from which this report was sent by wireless.]

The expedition has made extensive botanical, geological, and zoological collections. During the entire cruise we made soundings and conducted meteorological and hydrological observations. As far as possible, at interesting points, we maintained hydrological stations, and at astronomical points we determined the magnetic declination.

† These two paragraphs are taken from the *Geogr. Journ.* for Jan., 1914.